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ABSTRACT

One of the early training innovations in counselor preparation consisted of fishbowling. This article describes the theoretical background, development, and use of a fishbowl facility in the human services training programs of a counselor education program. In psychology, the term "fishbowl" first referred to the observation of one group by another group. Groups or individuals could monitor sessions from behind a two-way mirror. Recounted here is the physical set up and type of equipment used at the facility in question. The facility was built in 1974 and had its genesis in two earlier programs which used fishbowl techniques for specific purposes. The current training area is used for both undergraduate and graduate education. Some of the functions for which the facility is used include teaching group process and intervention techniques, and the critiquing of counselor-client interaction. Those faculty who use the fishbowl believe strongly in its use as a teaching tool. Further research on the training and clinical use of fishbowl facilities is needed. (RJM)

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Running head: Fishbowl Training Facilities

The Use of a Fishbowl Training Facility with Counselor Education Students

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Abstract

The authors present the theoretical background, development, and use of a fishbowl training facility. This facility serves the undergraduate and graduate human services training programs of a counselor education program. The benefits of such a facility in the preparation of human services personnel were discussed.

The Use of a Fishbowl Training Facility with Counselor Education Students

Introduction

The history of counselor preparation contains a succession of training innovations. One early innovation in group work training was fishbowling. This innovation expanded the perspectives upon which trainees could experience group process. At Eastern Washington University (EWU) , the Counselor Education Program Division incorporated the fishbowl technique into the development of their training facilities. This article will describe the use of a fishbowl facility with students learning group and family intervention skills.

Review of the Literature

In psychology, the term "fishbowl" first referred to the observation of one group by another group. This technique grew out of early T group experimentation (Benne, 1964; White, 1974). White (1974) detailed the structure of this experimentation. He stated:

> ... a group of participants was divided into subgroups, one subgroup observing another subgroup on a task or a group development issue, then reporting back to the observed group what was seen. Then the subgroups switched relative positions-- the "observed" now observing and reporting-- the "observing" now interacting around a task or issue, then getting process reports from those watching. (p. 474)

It did not take long for this T group experimentation to influence both training and practice in counselor education.

Cooper (1972) reported on the use of the fishbowl to enhance the T group experience of human services trainees. The structure of this training closely followed the fishbowl technique used by the T group pioneers. Other group process educators recounted similar training approaches (Bloom & Dobie, 1969; Berkovitz & Sugar, 1976; Fluet, Holmes, & Gordon, 1980; Yalom, 1970). More recently, Miller and Rollnick (1991; 1994) suggested the use of a fishbowl technique to teach Motivational Interviewing. Miller and Rollnick (1994) stated that fishbowling was an excellent way to incorporate active participation, demonstration, and didactic coaching into a single exercise.

Fishbowl techniques also have been used as a direct intervention. Fluet, Holmes, and Gordon (1980) described a group counseling format in which the adolescents on a psychiatric ward were divided into two groups. Each group took turns participating in group process and observing the other group from behind a one-way mirror. Another team of researchers used the same approach in family counseling (Gartner, Bass, & Wolbert, 1979). In this case, an adolescent son was at times placed in the observer mode behind a one-way mirror. The purpose of this fishbowling was to create a semipermeable boundary for the boy to distance himself from his parents' marital conflicts (Gartner, Bass, & Wolbert, 1979). The authors of both of the above qualitative studies reported successful therapeutic intervention outcomes.

In the past ten years, fishbowl training techniques have been modified by a number of human services trainers. The most common modification is the elimination of entire T groups switching back-and-forth between the observer and observed modes. Modern fishbowl training techniques in group and family intervention skills involve the live supervision of trainees, usually

from behind a one-way mirror (Bubenzer, DeTrude, Lofaro, Mahrle, & Sand-Pringle, 1986; Bubenzer, West, & Gold, 1991; Sperling, et al., 1986; West, Bubenzer, & Zarski, 1989). Human services educators also have made use of advances in technology (e.g., bug-in-ear, phone-in) in modifying fishbowl training approaches (Bubenzer, et al., 1986; Colapinto, 1983; Todtman, Bobele, & Strano, 1988; Wright, 1986).

There has been little research on the efficacy of fishbowl techniques in human services intervention training or practice. A survey of family counseling supervisors found that no fishbowl related practice was used by more than 15% of the respondents (McKenzie, Atkinson, Quinn, & Heath, 1986). In a qualitative study of three family counseling supervision models (live, delayed review, and verbal reports), researchers at Kent State University reported advantages and disadvantages for each approach (West, Bubenzer, Pinsoneault, & Holeman, 1993). In a rare empirical research study in this area, Fenell, Hovestadt, and Harvey (1986) tested whether live or delayed supervision was superior in enhancing trainees' skills in family counseling. The results of their study suggested that neither supervision method was superior to the other. However, their small, non-randomized sample still leaves unanswered the question of which is the superior supervision modality.

The purpose of this article is to describe in detail the fishbowl training methods and facility of a counselor education program. Recently, Myers and Smith (1994) noted the dearth of such descriptions in the professional literature. This article closes with suggestions for future research on fishbowling in counselor education.

Description of the EWU Fishbowl Facility

The EWU fishbowl facility contains four main rooms (see Figure 1). The intervention room is 14 ft by 12 ft (4.27 m by 3.66 m). One-way glass surrounds the room on three sides (broken lines designate one-way glass in Figure 1). The room is fitted with (a) three cameras operated by remote control, (b) a closed-circuit phone connected to the main observation space, (c) two marker boards, and (d) a clock. The cameras are all Panasonic model WV-BL200. Each camera is seated on a mount with a silent lens drive (Vicon model V12.5-75). Carpet covers this entire space. This room can be divided into two smaller intervention rooms by means of a sliding-track partition system. Student trainees can access supplies such as newsprint and markers quickly by means of a small storage closet located near the main work space.

An observation space that can hold between 50 and 75 people surrounds the intervention room. This space is fitted with theater-style desk chairs. As noted above, a phone line connects the intervention room to the main observation space. There is also a small side-observation room that can hold up to 15 people. The control room is outfitted with a variety of electronic devices including video monitors (Sayno Triple Video Monitor VM 4205), recorders (Panasonic NV 8500), editors (Panasonic Editing Controller A 500), and special effects generators (Echolab SE/1). From this control room, the video output from the fishbowl's cameras can be sent to a large classroom located near by.

History of EWU Fishbowl

The EWU fishbowl facility was built in 1974. However, there were two events that set the foundation for the establishment of such a training facility. In 1969, EWU's counselor education faculty became involved in the Education Professions Development Act's Pupil

Personnel Services Clustering Program. The aim of this program was twofold, (a) trainer networking, and (b) training and supervision enhancement. As part of this training, the counselor education faculty traveled to Salt Lake City for a regional cluster training session in February of 1970. At this session, DeWayne Kurpius introduced the faculty-trainees to the use of both in vivo and video-recorded modes of supervision. In order to conduct this instruction, the trainers connected two rooms in a local hotel with a 3/4 inch format Sony video system. The room with the VCR and video monitor served as the observation space for the supervision trainers and trainees. Live supervision of counselors by program trainees occurred in the other hotel room. The live training and use of video had a profound impact upon the EWU participants. Upon their return to the EWU campus, the counselor education faculty began to plan how they could best use the new training models that they learned in Salt Lake City.

The second foundational event occurred in tandem with the first. At the same time as the pupil personnel services cluster training, the counselor education students began to give the faculty the feedback that while they felt theoretically well-prepared for human services work or graduate school, they believed that they lacked the prerequisite micro-skills. The faculty's first attempt to remedy this problem was to employ the T group fishbowl technique to intervention skills training. In this case, a helper-trainee worked with a peer client while surrounded by a trainer and other helper-trainees. Gerber (1986) contains a detailed description of the set of skills taught using this training model. The counselor education faculty found this training approach efficacious and began to consider ways to incorporate it into their curricula.

In 1973, the EWU administration requested the counselor education faculty's input

regarding the remodeling of the building that housed their program. The faculty seized upon this opportunity as a chance to integrate their interests in in vivo and video-recording training methods. The faculty designed a training space that combined T group fishbowling with the training approaches they had encountered at the cluster program in Salt Lake City. The result of this planning and design work was the present EWU fishbowl.

In addition to the EWU counselor education faculty, nationally recognized family intervention trainers have used this fishbowl facility. In 1979, Harry Aponte demonstrated family counseling in the fishbowl to a group of over 150 trainees. Also, in 1983, Charles Fishman and other members of the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic staff presented two family counseling training workshops using the fishbowl. The phone-in technology was added for these workshops. Subsequent to this training, Charles Fishman sent a letter to the EWU president praising this innovative facility.

Present Training Practices with Fishbowl

EWU's Counselor Education Program Division runs both baccalaureate and master's degree programs in human services. The undergraduate degree program in Applied Psychology prepares students to work in a variety of human services settings. These settings include addiction treatment facilities, group homes, child care centers, psychiatric hospitals, and schools. A small percentage of the department's students go on to pursue graduate work in psychology, counseling, or social work. The Division offers CACREP accredited graduate programs in school counseling and mental health counseling. Students in all degree programs receive training utilizing the fishbowl facility.

At the undergraduate level, the fishbowl is used for courses on (a) group process and (b) intervention techniques. The group process course instructors employ the fishbowl in a manner similar to the old T group observer/observed rotation. The intervention skills course instructors use the fishbowl to conduct live group supervision of mock helping interview sessions. Within the context of fishbowl instruction, the professors use training techniques such as phone-in, call-out, walk-in, and tag-team. When the tag-team technique is employed, team members prepare and debrief in the side observation room. Use of this side room allows large group supervision to proceed uninterrupted in the main observation space. For example, an undergraduate intervention skills instructor and a graduate group counseling instructor can simultaneously use the same group session to meet their respective training goals. Also, because the fishbowl facility is equipped with cameras, intervention sessions can be taped and used later in delayed supervision.

At the graduate level, the fishbowl is used in a wide variety of courses. Instructors for these courses use the same training techniques employed at the undergraduate level. However, at this level the training incorporates the use of actual clients. At both levels, the size of the observation rooms allows the counselor education faculty to offer quality live supervision training to large numbers of students. At EWU, not only do students enrolled in skills courses such as intervention techniques and practicum receive training through live supervision, but students registered in content courses such as family counseling, group counseling, career counseling, and addictions counseling also receive such training. Thus, the emphasis in all human services coursework at EWU is on in vivo training. Without a fishbowl facility, such a training emphasis would have to be curtailed at the undergraduate level and substantially reduced at the graduate

level.

Implications for Future Practice and Research

The EWU counselor education faculty believes strongly in the effectiveness of the fishbowl facility as teaching tool. However, in science, opinion is not sufficient to establish truth. Thus, further empirical study of the training effectiveness of facilities such as the EWU fishbowl is warranted. Also, if such facilities are proven effective, then studies searching for the active ingredients (e.g., one-way mirrors, phone-in, call out, etc.) in such training would be necessary.

The focus of this article has been on the fishbowl as a training tool. However, there are suggestions in the professional literature that fishbowl facilities can be used as effective therapeutic interventions. For instance, could the call-out of a client enhance outcome in family counseling? If so, why? Questions such as these beg for further exploration.

Conclusion

This article presented the theoretical background, development, and use of a fishbowl facility in the human services training programs of a counselor education program. The benefits of such a facility were discussed. Further research on the training and clinical use of fishbowl facilities would benefit the counselor preparation field.

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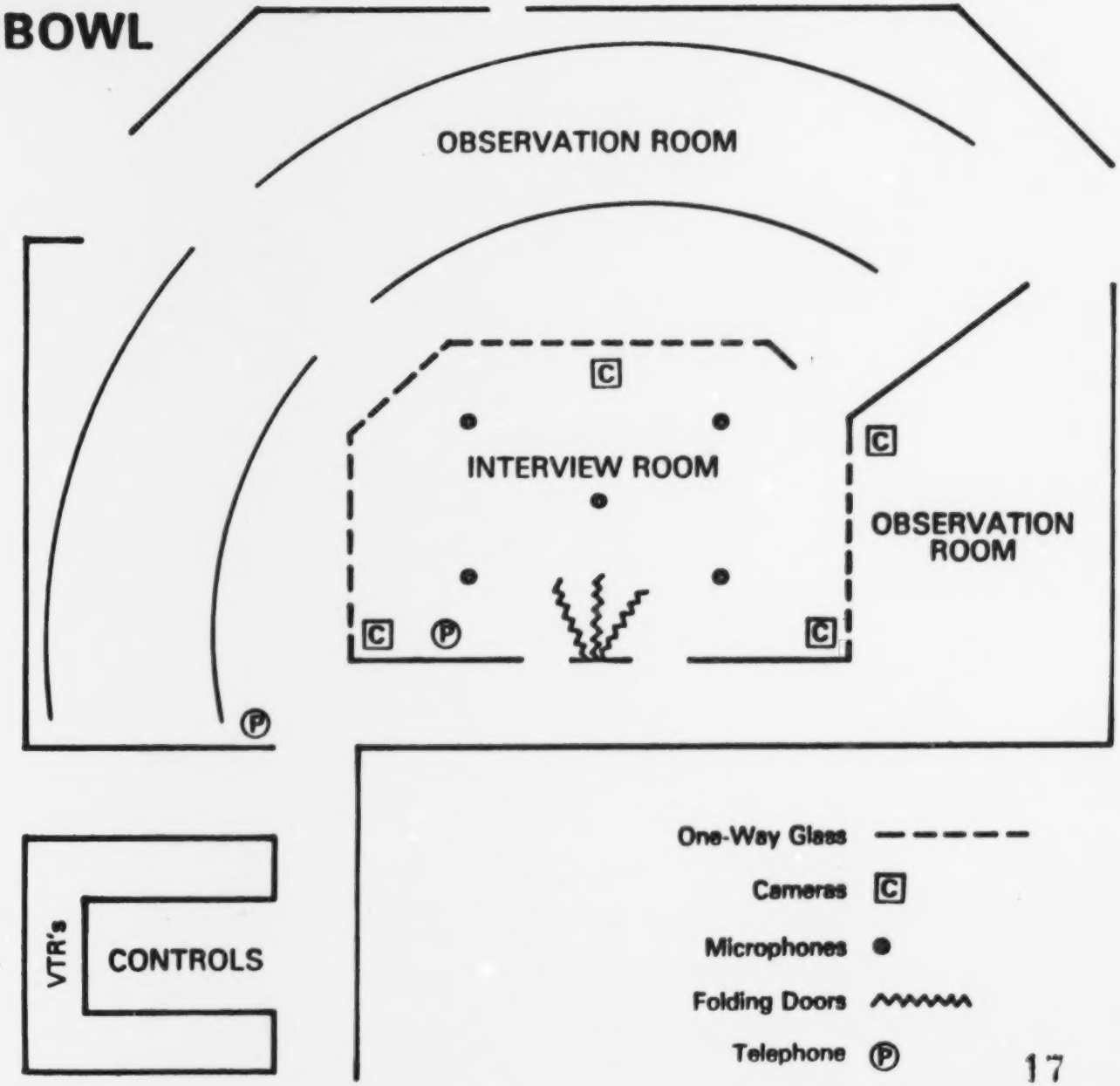
Figure Caption

Figure 1. The layout of the fishbowl facility.

FISHBOWL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